

U.S. Appln. No. 09/925,586
Amendment Dated Feb 17, 2005
Reply to Office Action of December 17, 2004
Docket No. BOC9-2000-0032 (178)

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REMARKS

These remarks are made in response to the final Office Action of December 17, 2004 (Office Action). As this response is timely filed within the 3-month shortened statutory period, no fee is believed due.

In paragraphs 2-3, claims 14-17, and 21-24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,405,123 to Rennard, *et al.* (Rennard). In paragraphs 4-5, claims 18 and 25 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rennard in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,721,288 to King, *et al.* (King).

In paragraphs 6-7, claims 19 and 26 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in an independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In response to the Office Action, Applicants have amended independent claims 14 and 21 to include the limitations previously included in claims 19 and 26. Claims 19 and 26 were thereafter canceled. Claims 18 and 25 have been amended to be consistent with the newly amended independent claims upon which they depend. No new matter has been added as a result of these amendments.

Responsive to the Amendments, Applicants, respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the objections previously made to claims 19 and 26, which are now applicable to claims 14 and 21. Accordingly, claims 14-18 20-25, and 27 should now be a condition for allowance.

The aforementioned amendments were motivated by a desire to expedite prosecution by accepting claims indicated as allowable. Applicants make no assertions pertaining to the merits of the rejections asserted against the independent claims as they existed in their pre-amendment form, and reserve the right to separately pursue these claims in a continuation application based upon the present application.

Further, Applicants understand that until the time that an allowance is issued, an Examiner can reconsider his or her position with respect to allowable subject matter. Applicants respectfully reserve the right to continue pursuing the present application and claims as they existed before the present amendment without estoppels should such a reconsideration occur.

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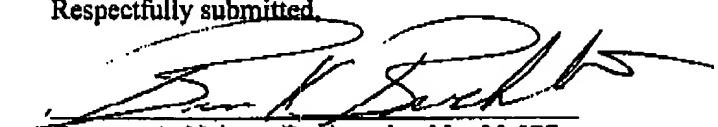
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That is, in making the present amendments to accept subject matter indicated as allowable, Applicants are making no explicit or implicit statement regarding the merits of the rejections contained within the Office Action.

The Applicants believe that the application in its present form, including claims 14-18 20-25, and 27, is now in full condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested. The Applicants request that the Examiner call the undersigned if clarification is needed on any matter within this Amendment, or if the Examiner believes a telephone interview would expedite the prosecution of the subject application to completion.

Respectfully submitted,

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